



Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Volume 16
Issue 3 April 1976

Article 10

4-1-1976

ERIC/RCS Report: Retrieving Information From ERIC

Rodney J. Barth

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Barth, R. J. (1976). ERIC/RCS Report: Retrieving Information From ERIC. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 16 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol16/iss3/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



ERIC/RCS REPORT: RETRIEVING INFORMATION FROM ERIC

Rodney J. Barth

CLEARING HOUSE ON COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system currently consisting of sixteen clearinghouses under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE). Each clearinghouse is responsible for obtaining the educational literature within its area for evaluation, indexing, and abstracting into the ERIC data bank, and also for providing information analysis materials and various user services based on the information contained in ERIC. Transcripts of speeches, topical papers, program descriptions, inservice and preservice workshop materials, curriculum guides, research reports, conference proceedings, and educational journal articles are among the documents indexed in the ERIC system. As one of the sixteen clearinghouses, the Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) is responsible for resources, information, and materials in reading as well as in the other communication skill areas—English, journalism, speech, and the theater. The data collected in reading by ERIC/RCS are available in at least 600 ERIC microfiche collections for use by reading coordinators, reading consultants, teachers who stress content reading, and other educators.

In order to use the ERIC system to best advantage, each individual needs a working concept of how to retrieve information. It does not take the skills of a librarian to acquire valuable information from the ERIC system, although a brief explanation from a librarian may be in order for a beginner. The effective user of ERIC will need to be familiar with the tools of the ERIC system, including the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*, *Resources in Education*, and *Current Index to Journals in Education*. The following descriptions and definitions of ERIC tools and terms should help the beginning user of the system to find needed information. A hypothetical case study, which follows the definitions, provides an illustration of how to use ERIC.

TOOLS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM

The *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*, the key to the entire system, is continuously updated to maintain accuracy and serves as the source of all subject terms (descriptors) used for indexing and for retrieval of documents and journal articles in the ERIC collection (see Figure 1). Each item entered in the ERIC system is assigned several descriptors selected from the *Thesaurus* that reflect the essential subject matter contained in the document. Descriptors marked by an asterisk (*) indicate the major con-

Figure 1. Extract from *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*

Used For	<i>Reading Instruction</i>
Narrower Term(s)	UF Teaching Reading
Broader Term(s)	NT Language Experience Approach
Related Term(s)	BT Language Instruction
	RT Adult Reading programs
	Braille
	Content Reading
	Directed Reading Activity
	Early Reading
	Experience Charts
	Individualized Reading
	Initial Teaching Alphabet
	Kinesthetic Methods
	Large Type Materials
	Miscue Analysis
	Oral Reading
	Phonics
	Readability
	Reading
	Reading Games
	Sight Method
	Silent Reading
	Structural Analysis
	Talking Books
	<i>Content Reading</i>
	BT Reading
	RT Interpretive Reading
	Reading Comprehension
	Reading Instruction

USING THE ERIC SYSTEM

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. ERIC's objective is to keep educators informed about current developments in education. Information collected by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the other ERIC clearinghouses can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. For complete ordering information consult the monthly issues of *Resources in Education* (RIE) or contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801. Documents with ED numbers are indexed in *Resources in Education*. Those with EJ numbers are indexed in *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE). And those with CS numbers are recently acquired materials; ED or EJ numbers will soon be assigned.

cepts of the document, while the unmarked descriptors denote concepts of only minor emphasis in the document. In cases where no descriptor term adequately describes some important feature of a document, an *identifier* term may be assigned in addition to the descriptors. Any word, name, or phrase may be an identifier, thus any concept not covered by a descriptor may be indexed through an identifier.

Abstracts of documents are printed with appropriate descriptors in *Resources in Education* (RIE), which is published monthly by NIE through the Government Printing Office. Monthly volumes and yearly compilations of RIE are available in many college and university libraries as well as in some special libraries. About 1,000 documents from the sixteen ERIC Clearinghouses are indexed and summarized in each monthly volume. Each volume contains the main entries and subject, author, and institution indexes.

The subject index is arranged alphabetically by descriptors. Documents which have been assigned a particular term as a major descriptor—and there can be up to five—are listed in the subject index under that term (see Figures 2 and 3). Thus, the title of a document which has been assigned five major descriptors will be listed in five places in the subject index. In addition to the title, a six-digit ED (for ERIC Document) accession number is listed. While documents indexed in RIE are available at microfiche collections in various libraries, most can be purchased on microfiche (MF) or in a hard copy (HC) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

Articles from nearly 700 educational journals are indexed in the same manner in another ERIC publication, *Current Index to Journals In Education* (CIJE), (see Figure 4). These articles are assigned a six-digit EJ (for Educational Journal) accession number and are annotated in most cases. Semiannual and annual compilations of CIJE are available. There is no need to refer to the monthly issues of CIJE to read the annotations—each cumulative volume also contains a Main Entry section. Each entry lists the complete title, the author, the source (journal title, volume number, date, and page numbers, assigned descriptor terms, and particularly in cases where the content is not clear from the title, a brief annotation. Copies of journal articles indexed in CIJE are not available from ERIC. They must be obtained from a library collection or from the publisher.

A hypothetical case study on content reading which incorporates the previously introduced tools, terms, and diagrams in a search of the ERIC system follows.

SEARCHING ERIC: A CASE STUDY

Bob Jones recently became the reading coordinator at the high school where he had been teaching for several years. During his tenure as a language arts instructor, he learned that one of the biggest problems students face is comprehending what they read. As a reading coordinator he feels that more materials are needed on how to improve reading skills in the content areas. Jones knows of the ERIC system and decides to spend

Figure 2. Subject Index from RIE

Descriptor Term	<i>Content Reading</i>
Subject Heading	Aiding Secondary Subject Teachers in Guiding Reading Growth.
Document Titles	ED 092 887 A Classroom Reading Program.
	ED 089 198 The College Commitments to Attainable National Goals—Learning Support Services for Open Admissions Students.
	ED 085 664 The Contribution of Reading Instruction to Success in the Content Areas in the Secondary Schools.
	ED 083 546 The Development of Learning Modules for the Training of Content Teachers in Reading: A Focus on Process.
	ED 085 667 Differentiating Instruction to Improve Comprehension in Middle School Content Areas.
	ED 092 882 The Effects of Different Content Area Materials upon the Comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students.
	ED 085 670 Every Teacher a Teacher of Reading—For Only a Week.
	ED 080 971 Improving Reading in Every Class: A Sourcebook for Teachers.
	ED 089 235// An In-Service Program Designed to Improve the Teaching of Reading Study Skills.
	ED 080 962// Preparation of Reading Content Specialists for the Junior High School; Teaching Reading in the Content Areas at the Junior High School Level: Strategies for Meeting a Wide Range of Individual Differences in Reading Achievement. Final Report.
	ED 088 003 Reading in the Content Fields; An Annotated Bibliography.

Figure 3. Main Entry from RIE

ED Number ————— ED 092 887 CS 001 151

Author ————— *Courtney, Leonard*

Title ————— **Aiding Secondary Subject Teachers
in Guiding Reading Growth.**

Date ————— Pub Date Sep 73

Availability
and Price ————— Note—19p.; Paper presented at the
International Reading Association Far-
West Rocky Mountain Regional Con-
ference (Victoria, B.C., September 1973)

Descriptor Terms ————— **EDRS Price MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 Plus
Postage.**

Abstract ————— Descriptors—*Content Reading, Critical
Reading, Reading, *Reading Develop-
ment, Reading Improvement, *Reading
Instruction, Reading Programs, *Reading
Skills, Secondary Grades, *Teaching
Techniques

Described in this paper is a technique for reading instruction at the secondary level which emphasizes paragraph-passage examination and is intended to fit into any content teacher's daily work. The technique described provides occasion to establish purpose in reading-study assignments, utilize experience and previous background to develop meaning, introduce new vocabulary, determine word meaning from context, intensify levels of comprehension from literal to evaluative, examine semantic and literary nuances, and study paragraph structure and internal paragraph relationships. Three different kinds of passages, chosen principally for their illustrative value rather than for any direct practical transfer to a particular classroom, are presented. Passage one briefly describes New York City; suggestions for teacher use include discussing general background relative to the passage, use of questioning to facilitate understanding, and identifying the main idea. Passage two is a social studies passage and is presented to demonstrate multiple word skills and demonstrate a shift from literal to critical reading. The third passage presented is the opening lines from "Dandelion Wine" and is intended to serve as an example of introducing a story and as an exercise in entry to imaginative language. (WR)

Figure 4. Main Entry from CIJE

EJ Number	EJ 103 969	CS 701 344
Article Title and Author	Sources for Teaching Reading in the Content Areas. Sanacore, Joseph, <i>Reading Improvement</i> , v11 n1, pp 54-57, Spr 74	
Journal, Volume	*Reading Instruction, *Content Reading, *Educational Resources, *Instructional Materials, Secondary Education, Bibliographies, English, Social Studies, Sciences, Mathematics	
Descriptors	Fifty-four sources are listed for the teaching of reading in the content areas of social studies, English, science, and mathematics. (RB)	
Annotations	<p>EJ 105 640 CS 701 443</p> <p>Shock Treatment Inservice Program Adds New Life to Reading. Osborn, Bess, <i>Journal of Reading</i>, v18, n2, pp 122-26, Nov 74.</p> <p>*Inservice Teacher Education, *Content Reading, *Reading Instruction, *Reading Skills, *Program Descriptions, Secondary Education</p> <p>Describes a teacher inservice program designed to help secondary teachers improve reading skills in the content areas. (RB)</p>	

some time investigating it with the hope of uncovering some information that will help teachers in the content areas.

Jones's first step is to phrase, as narrowly and accurately as possible, the question he seeks to answer: "What materials are available that content reading teachers can use to improve the reading skills of high school students?" The key concepts to be used in locating descriptors should be evident if the question is precise enough.

The next step is for Jones to determine the descriptors he will use to conduct his search. He goes through the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*, looking first under the term "Reading." He finds a list of terms under "Reading" which are categorized according to the notations NT, BT, and RT, indicating that those terms are narrower than (NT), broader than (BT), or related to (RT) the term "Reading." Each of the terms listed under these abbreviations is a descriptor, with the exception of those listed under UF (Used For), a notation which leads the searcher to other terms. This cross-listing of descriptors enables a searcher to identify other descriptors that might be useful.

In this case, Jones picks "Reading Instruction," "Reading Comprehension," and "Content Reading." He also adds the leveling term "Secondary Education," which is the appropriate grade level for materials as expressed in his question. By searching through the subject index of RIE, Jones should find a number of documents which might be relevant. The ED numbers of these documents should be recorded under column headings with the appropriate descriptors:

Reading Instruction	Reading Comprehension	Content Reading	Secondary Education
------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------	------------------------

Since there is an abundance of information in RIE on content reading, the above descriptors should enable Jones to retrieve the most relevant and useful materials.

The document resume provided as a sample in Figure 3 reflects Jones's selection of descriptors for retrieving information from RIE. From the title of the document listed in the subject index, Jones determined that he was interested in reading the abstract of ED 092 887. By reading this abstract and others which interest him, he can decide which ERIC documents he wants to read in their entirety. Jones can read those documents available on microfiche on the microfiche reader in his library. If he wishes, he can order either microfiche or paper copy reproductions using ordering instructions available in each issue of RIE. By reading the abstracts of documents *not* available on microfiche, Jones can determine if he would like to purchase copies of these documents, too. If so, he can order them from the publisher by using the ordering information that accompanies each abstract.

Jones can also obtain a list of references from educational journals relevant to the search topic by using the same descriptors in searching the *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE) as were used in searching RIE. CIJE entries include brief annotations whenever an article's title is not indicative of its content. However, in order to read the entire article, Jones must either obtain it from the library or order it from the publisher. Since the contents of journals are copyrighted, copies of articles are not available through the ERIC system.

By now, Jones has obtained a significant body of information on the subject he is investigating. He may continue the search or decide that what he has found is sufficient.

SEARCH SUMMARY

1. State your question as accurately and precisely as possible.
2. Consult the ERIC *Thesaurus* for descriptors related to your question.
3. Look under the selected descriptors in the subject index of *Resources in Education*.
4. List those documents that are related to your question, noting those that occur under two or more descriptors (these will probably be related most directly to your question).

5. Read the abstract of each document to determine its significance to your question. (Entire documents may be read on microfiche or ordered from EDRS.)
6. Using the same descriptor terms, consult the subject index of CIJE. (Relevant journal articles may be read at the library.)

OTHER RESOURCES

Low cost computer searches of the ERIC system are available throughout the country from both public and private search services, and Jones could have used one of these services had he so desired. For availability of these computer search facilities, contact your local or state board of education, a nearby college or university library, or a school of education.

Another source of information is the ERIC Clearinghouses, each concerned with information analysis in a specialized field of educational interest. The staff of ERIC/RCS, for example, produces short, current bibliographies on selected topics and articles for a number of professional journals in the communication skills field. The Clearinghouse also commissions information analysis monographs analyzing and reflecting the current state of knowledge in specific areas. Other Clearinghouse publications include longer bibliographies and annotated topical indexes.

If you are near one of the Reading Resource Centers (RRC)—mini-clearinghouses affiliated with ERIC/RCS located at 56 teacher-training colleges and universities—check their facilities for information on topics of interest to the reading profession. The staff of each RRC in operation is able to answer your questions regarding the use of the ERIC system.

If you are still unsure of how the ERIC system works and how it can help you, ask the librarian at the ERIC collection for assistance, or write to ERIC/RCS at NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.